

A serene winter night scene featuring a snow-covered mountain range in the background. In the foreground, a small, snow-laden evergreen tree stands next to a dark, snow-covered cabin. To the right, a larger, two-story wooden cabin with a snow-covered roof and glowing windows is visible. The sky is a deep, dark blue, and the overall atmosphere is quiet and peaceful.

Silent Night

THE STORY OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL



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In a tiny hamlet, nestled in the Alps, on a starry winter night in late 1816, 24-year-old curate Joseph Mohr, wrote the lyrics that evolved into “Silent Night.”

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Mohr was born in Salzburg, Austria in 1892, the son of a seamstress and soldier-for-hire who never married.

Early in life, Mohr came to the attention of the music director at Salzburg Cathedral who, impressed by Mohr's musical ability, arranged for his education.





Mohr grew up at the Benedictine Abbey at Kremsmünster where he studied singing and violin. His favorite instrument was the guitar.





Two years after he wrote the words, Father Mohr was serving at St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf, Austria. That Christmas Eve, Mohr's thoughts turned to his lyrics. He went to see his friend, music director and schoolteacher Franz Xaver Gruber, who lived in nearby Arnsdorf above the school. Mohr asked Gruber to set his lyrics to music.



Photograph by Gakuro

That Christmas Eve at St. Nicholas' midnight Mass, the two men sang "Stille Nacht" for the first time.

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A few years later, Karl Mauracher, a master organ builder from Salzburg, was in Oberndorf to repair an organ at St. Nicholas'. Father Mohr gave Mauracher a copy of his Christmas carol.

Thanks to the organ builder's network, "Silent Night" was soon being sung far and wide by families of traveling folk singers.



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In 1848, Father Joseph Mohr died, as he was born, in obscurity and poverty. He used all his resources to comfort the elderly and educate children.

Today Father Mohr's song has been translated into over 140 languages. A museum in Wagrain, Austria commemorates his memory and his Christmas carol "Silent Night."



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And, every year on Christmas Eve, the young curate's vision of an infant sleeping in "heavenly peace" echoes gently throughout the world.